

GOLF AUSTRALIA RULES

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2016



GolfAustralia

National Referees 2015 Emirates Australian Open



Rules on Tour

By Tom Duguid (Editor & National Referee)

During the Tasmanian Men's Senior Amateur Championship held at Mowbray Golf Club this February, a competitor used a 'wrong' ball for multiple holes in breach of the One Ball Condition during the second round of the 54-hole event. He didn't know he'd done anything wrong and returned his card on that basis. The breach was discovered prior to commencement of the third round.

This was a good example of the amendment to Rule 6-6d, effective on January 1st this year as set out as below in our previous Newsletter.

- Limited Exception to Disqualification Penalty for Submission of Incorrect Score Card - A new exception has been introduced to Rule 6-6d (Wrong Score for Hole) to provide that a player is not disqualified for returning a lower score for a hole than actually taken as a result of failing to include a penalty stroke although note Decisions 32-2a/1, 32-2a/4 and 32-2a/5. that the player did not know were incurred before returning the score card. Instead, the player incurs the penalty under the Rule that was breached and must add an additional penalty of two strokes for the score

card error. In all other cases in which a player returns a score for any hole lower than actually taken, the penalty will continue to be disqualification.

The introduction of the new Exception under Rule 6-6d will maintain the importance of returning an accurate score card by penalising the player two strokes for the score card error in addition to the penalty for the original underlying breach of the Rules.

The situation was referred to Golf Australia asking if the penalty should be six or eight strokes – ie a maximum of four strokes for multiple breaches of the Condition plus two or four strokes for failing to include the penalty strokes on multiple holes.

Golf Australia sought confirmation from The R&A. The response was that the total penalties are eight strokes, based on the guidance in the new Decision 6-6d/7. The Decision, in which a player breached a rule on one hole and a different rule on another hole, uses the term "each hole at which he committed a breach of Rule 6-6d". Without any qualification of that, that means that two penalties of two strokes needed to be added.

Summer 2016: In this edition



Rules Quiz
Test your Rules knowledge with the latest Rules Quiz.



Distance Measuring Devices
Can I use my distance measuring device? Your questions answered.



Ball in Play
Frank Gal explains the rules situations when your ball is in play.



Under the previous Rule 6-6d, the player would have been disqualified.

Other new Decisions on Rule 6-6d offer the following guidance –

Decision 6-6d/8

Q. A competitor returned his score card without including a penalty of disqualification he had incurred (e.g. he had made a stroke with a nonconforming club or did not correct his error of playing a wrong ball). If this is discovered before the close of competition, is the competitor disqualified for a breach of Rule 6-6d?

A. Yes. The Exception to Rule 6-6d does not apply to a failure to include a penalty of disqualification, even if the competitor was unaware he had incurred the disqualification penalty.

Decision 6-6d/9

Q. On the 10th hole a competitor accidentally causes his ball to move in breach of Rule 18-2. The competitor is aware that the penalty for a breach of Rule 18-2 is one stroke, but is not aware that he is required to replace the ball and play it from its original location. Does the Exception to Rule 6-6d apply if the competitor fails to include the additional penalty stroke in his score for the 10th hole?

A. Yes, the Exception to Rule 6-6d applies if a competitor fails to include one or more penalty strokes on a hole that, prior to returning his score card, he did not know he had incurred. In this case, the Committee would include the additional penalty stroke under Rule

18 for the competitor's failure to replace the ball, and the additional penalty of two strokes for a breach of Rule 6-6d would also be added to the competitor's score on the 10th hole. This also applies to situations where a competitor is aware of a breach of the Rules, but, unaware that the penalty for the breach is two strokes, mistakenly returns a score card that includes a one-stroke penalty for the breach.

Decision 6-6d/10

Q. A, in ignorance of the Rules and with the concurrence of B, his marker, improved the area in which he was to drop a ball by repairing a divot hole. Subsequently, C, a fellow-competitor, advised A that he (A) was in breach of Rule 13-2. A disagreed, failed to settle the doubtful point with the Committee at the end of the round and returned his score card without including a two-stroke penalty for a breach of Rule 13-2. Before the close of the competition, C advised the Committee of the incident. Should A be disqualified under Rule 6-6d?

A. Yes. Rule 6-6d provides that a competitor must be disqualified if he had returned a score lower than actually taken for any reason other than failure to include a penalty he did not know he had incurred. As C pointed out to A that he had proceeded incorrectly and A took no action to check whether he had incurred a penalty before returning his score card, A is deemed to have known that he had incurred a penalty. The same result would occur if, for any reason, a competitor were to be uncertain as to whether he had proceeded correctly or incurred a penalty.

Rules Quiz

By Brian Nesbitt

(Victorian State Level Referee)

Answers can be found on the back page

Club Level, No Rule Book Quiz – Rule Headings Please.

The key here is to try to learn Pages 2 and 3 in the Rule Book

Here I want you to fill in the Rule Headings as by now you should have learned the first ten headings at least:

1. Rule 10 Heading is....
2. Rule 12
3. Rule 13
4. Rule 24
5. Rule 25
6. Rule 26
7. Rule 27
8. Rule 8
9. Rule 19
10. Rule 15

Club Level, you may use the Rule Book if necessary here, but I want the Rule number and sub-para as well please.

1. Cleaning Ball
2. Flagstick: Unauthorised Attendance
3. Putting Green - Touching Line of Putt
4. Clubs - Damaged Repair and Replacement
5. Striking the Ball- Assistance
6. Ball at Rest Moved – By opponent
7. Ball Unplayable
8. Loose Impediments - Relief
9. Teeing Ground – Ball Falling Off Tee
10. The Player - Rules

This next Section will require the use of the Decisions Book and is aimed at State Level Referees. Please give the Decision number, but you should be able to give the Rule number and possibly the sub-

para from memory! Ideally we want a decision within 3 minutes.

First, however, write down the rule number and sub-para for the following headings:

1. Improving Lie
2. Playing from a Wrong Place
3. Making Next Stroke from where Previous Stroke Made
4. Stroke and Distance
5. Wrong Putting Green

Now we will need the Decisions Book. Please give the rule number and sub-para if possible.

1. A player's ball comes to rest against a movable obstruction. The player lifts the ball and drops it away from the obstruction instead of removing the obstruction as provided in Rule 24-1. What is the ruling?
2. A player's starting time is listed as 0900 am. He does not arrive at the 1st tee until 09:00:45 am and claims that, as it is still 9:00am, he is not late for his starting time. What is the ruling?
3. Appendix I, Local Rule 4a is in operation. A player's ball lies through the green and an immovable obstruction on or within two club-lengths of the putting green and within two club-lengths of the ball intervenes on the line of play between the ball and the hole. The player takes relief as follows: he lifts, cleans and drops the ball correctly, within one club-length of the nearest point of relief to where the ball lay that (a) is not nearer the hole, (b) avoids intervention and (c) is not in a hazard or on a putting green. Is this the correct procedure?
4. Is a ball in a bunker if it lies on the edge of the bunker overhanging, but not touching, the sand?
5. A player plays his second shot, searches for his ball briefly and then goes back and drops another ball under Rule 27-1. Before he plays the dropped ball, and within the five-minute search period, the original ball is found. Is the player required to continue with the dropped ball?

Tip of the day: Save all the hassle of the Index. If you know the rule number, it is the same rule number in the Decisions Book, same sub-paragraph too. Now you only have to check through a few decisions to find the answer.

Distance Measuring Devices



(Courtesy of The R&A website www.randa.org)

From the days when selecting a club was done by “eye”, there has been a progression of aids available to a player to help gauge distance. Initially, there was the introduction of course yardage charts (a development often attributed to Jack Nicklaus), distance markers at the sides of fairways and distances on sprinkler heads. More recently, we have reached a point where it has become quite common for Committees in certain areas of the world to put a Local Rule in place to permit competitors in their events to use electronic distance-measuring devices. (See Appendix I, Part A, Section 7 for the recommended wording.)

Where such a Local Rule is in place, competitors must ensure that the Device they are using complies with the restrictions of this Local Rule and that they do not access other information which would cause them to be in breach of the Rules.

Understanding the Rules on DMDs

Rule 14-3 does not permit the use of any artificial device or unusual equipment for the purpose of gauging or measuring distance.

However, a Local Rule may allow the use of a distance-measuring device during a round of golf, to measure distance and distance alone.

Do's and Don't's

You may use a device to:

- Measure straight line distance between two points;
- Access a club yardage chart based off historical information;
- Enter your hole scores;
- Enter shot information – for later analysis (e.g. club used and location);
- Access a local weather forecast.

You may not use a device to:

- gauge or measure slope;
- gauge or measure other conditions that might affect play (e.g., wind speed or direction);
- gauge or measure a player's physical or mental state, such as heart rate;
- access recommendations that might assist the player in making a stroke or in his play
- calculate effective distance based on elevation changes or other conditions affecting shot distance.

Your Distance-Measuring Device Questions Answered

Most of the questions that The R&A receives in connection with distance-measuring devices, along with the answers, are provided below.

Q. Can I use a distance-measuring device in a competition?

A. The use of a distance-measuring device during a stipulated round remains contrary to the Rules of Golf under Rule 14-3 (Artificial Devices and Unusual Equipment; Abnormal Use of Equipment). However, since January 2006, a Committee can permit the use of some such devices via a Local Rule.

Q. What kind of distance-measuring devices are allowed by Local Rule?

A. A GPS, laser, smart phone, any really - provided the device meets certain guidelines and recommendations. The important thing to remember is that the device must only be used to access permitted information. The player would be in breach of the Rules if the device is used to access prohibited information, such as slope and club recommendation features.

Q. What about multi-functional devices, such as a mobile phone, with a distance-measuring application?

A. Subject to any club or course regulations, a multi-functional device may be used, provided it is not to access information that, if used, would cause the player to be in breach of the Rules.

Q. If a player uses a smartphone to look up a weather forecast, is the player gauging the conditions?

No. Accessing weather reports provided by a weather station through an app or internet browser, is not considered to be actively measuring or gauging the conditions and is permissible whether or not the Local Rule for distance-measuring devices is in effect.

Q. My smartphone has an inbuilt spirit level as part of the functionality of the phone but it is not part of the distance-measuring app. Can I use the phone as a distance-measuring device?

Yes, provided that you do not use the level in a manner that might assist you in your play.

Q. My smartphone has a compass feature. Can I use the phone as a distance-measuring device?

Yes. A compass only provided directional information and does not gauge or measure variable conditions or assist the player in his play and is permissible whether or not the Local Rule for distance-measuring devices is in effect.



Q. What should the Local Rule permitting distance-measuring devices say?

A. The wording of the recommended Local Rule (Appendix 1, Part A, 7) reads as follows:

“Distance-Measuring Devices

[Specify as appropriate, e.g. In this competition, or For all play at this course, etc.], a player may obtain distance information by use of a distance-measuring device. If, during a stipulated round, a player uses a distance-measuring device to gauge or measure other conditions that might affect his play (e.g. elevation changes, wind speed, etc.), the player is in breach of Rule 14-3.”

Q. Why not simply allow distance-measuring devices without the need for a Local Rule?

A. The advent of distance-measuring devices and their use in the game divides opinion at many levels. Many golfers are fans of these devices as they feel it puts them on a level footing with tournament professionals who have caddies providing precise distance information, whilst others will argue that there is no place for such technology in the game. As such, it

was, and remains, appropriate to allow individual clubs and Committees to decide what is right for them, their competitions and their players.

Q. If a Club has in place the Local Rule permitting distance-measuring devices and an external body, the national golf association, for example, is running an event there, does that mean that distance-measuring devices are automatically allowed in the national event?

A. No. It is the responsibility of the national golf association to establish its own Local Rules for the event. The Local Rules written by the Committee in charge of the competition supersede what the Club has in place on a day-to-day basis.

Q. If the Local Rules for distance-measuring devices is in place, may players share a distance-measuring device?

A. Yes, but it is important that players sharing devices do not unduly delay play. In addition, information on distance obtained from a distance-measuring device can be shared between the player, partner, fellow-competitor or opponent if so wished.

Root of the Problem

(By Tom Fee - Media & Communications Officer, Golf WA)

One of the many interesting moments of the final round of the ISPS Handa Women’s Australian Open came from a certain bunker shot by eventual winner Haru Nomura.

Nomura was amazing in her final round, sinking every putt imaginable on her way to a three stroke victory over Lydia Ko.

But earlier in her round on the fifth hole, Nomura was clearly shown on television to hit something that resembled a twig in her backswing while in a bunker. The commentary team referred to this thing as a “pine needle” or “twig” on numerous occasions, but when Nomura made contact with it on her backswing there was no two shot penalty applied for making contact with a loose impediment.

What gives?

Even with the two shot penalty Nomura is still the winner — unless you want to take this to the extreme and argue that Nomura would also be subject to a further two shot penalty for signing for an incorrect scorecard (under Rule 6-6d).

So should we don our tinfoil hats and say that we’ve uncovered one of the biggest scandals in recent recent golfing history? Should Lydia Ko in fact be the 2016 Australian Open champion? “Afraid not” says Golf Australia Director of Rules Simon Magdulski, who happened to be the official who was called in to provide Rules guidance to Nomura before she played her shot.

“To the casual viewer on TV, it might seem a bit odd,” said Magdulski about the ruling.

“But it was actually an open and shut case.”

It turns out, that these “twigs” are in fact small roots that seem to commonly pop up on the West Course at The Grange.

“In the week leading up to the event, we were well aware a number of bunkers had these roots sticking up, so it was a fairly unsurprising situation to be in” said Magdulski.



But why is it important that these are roots instead of twigs or a pine needle?

If it’s a twig, it is a loose impediment. As per Decision 13-4/33, you can only make contact with loose impediments while making a stroke – and the backswing is not considered a part of the stroke.

“If the player touches leaves on their backswing, they are in breach of Rule 13-4c which prohibits a player from touching a loose impediment in a hazard before making a stroke in the hazard. A stroke does not begin until after the completion of the player’s backswing”

But a root is just like a tree or grass, and anything growing is fair game on the backswing. As such, Nomura’s scorecard and Australian Open title is 100% legitimate and we can appreciate her bunker shot on 5 for what it was.

An outstanding shot.

Ball in Play

(By Frank Gal, GA Rules of Golf & Amateur Status Sub-Committee Member)

The first Rule of Golf tells us that golf involves playing a ball with a club from the teeing ground into the hole (Rule 1-1).

It is important to know when a ball is in play in order to proceed correctly under the Rules, and a careful reading of the definition of “ball in play” is a good starting point towards getting that knowledge.

The definition tells us firstly that a ball is not in play at a hole until a stroke has been made on the teeing ground, i.e., from within the two club-length deep area described in the definition of “teeing ground”. This is why there is no penalty if your ball falls off the tee before a stroke is made, even if you caused the ball to fall off the tee by touching it with a club. There would also be no penalty if the ball was knocked off the tee accidentally by a practice swing, since a practice swing is not a stroke (see the definition of “stroke”).

However, an “air swing” which was meant to hit the ball is a stroke, so if you have an “air swing” at a teed ball, the ball is in play at its position on top of the tee and if you subsequently cause it to move (except as allowed by the Rules), you will incur a penalty stroke.

The definition goes on to say that “the ball remains in play until it is holed, except when it is lost, out of bounds or lifted, or another ball has been substituted...” The following points should be noted regarding this section of the definition:

- A ball is lost when any one of the five conditions listed in the definition of “lost ball” exists. Since a lost ball is not in play, if you make a stroke at a ball that is deemed to be lost you are making a stroke at a wrong ball and will incur the penalty outlined in Rule 15-3.
- If you make a stroke at a ball lying out of bounds, you are also playing a wrong ball.
- Playing a provisional ball is not the same as putting a substituted ball into play. A provisional ball only becomes the ball in play when the original ball is lost or out of bounds or when a stroke has been made at the provisional ball from where the original ball is likely to be or from a point nearer the hole than that place (Rule 27-2b). If none of these conditions exists, the provisional ball must be abandoned and if you make a further stroke at it you would be playing a wrong ball.

The definition was revised in the 2016 edition and now includes the following statement:



“A ball in play that has been marked but not lifted remains in play. A ball that has been marked, lifted and replaced is back in play whether or not the ball-marker has been removed.”

Rule 20-4 was also amended to clarify that a ball that has been replaced is in play whether or not the ball-marker has been removed.

This was the case prior to 2016 but the principle was previously contained in Decision 20-4/1. Including this clarification in the definition and the Rule itself will greatly assist players to understand a previously much misunderstood Rule.

To illustrate the principle, if you mark a ball, say on the putting green, it is still in play until it is lifted; putting a marker behind the ball does not take it out of play, the act of lifting it does. If your ball in play is moved by wind, it must be played from its new position even if the marker is in place behind the ball because the ball is still in play.

The definition then goes on to clarify the status of a ball which is played from outside the “teeing ground” when starting play of a hole.

In stroke play, if you play a ball from outside the teeing ground when starting a hole, or when attempting to correct this mistake, the error must be corrected by playing a ball from within the teeing ground (Rule 11-4b). The ball was not in play and if you continue the round you would have no valid score for that hole.

However, if you start a hole correctly from within the teeing ground but the ball goes out of bounds, you are faced with a different set of circumstances if you play the next stroke from outside the teeing ground. In this case, the definition advises that the ball played from outside the teeing ground is in play. The hole was started correctly when the original ball was hit out of bounds. Although the second ball is in play, it was played from a wrong place and the provisions of Rule 20-7c would apply.

In match play the result is different again. If you play a ball from outside the teeing ground, your opponent may require you to cancel the stroke and play a ball from within the teeing ground. If your opponent does not require you to replay the stroke, the exception to the definition clarifies that the ball played from outside the teeing ground is in fact in play (see Rule 11-4a).

This discussion highlights the importance that a sound knowledge of the definitions has in the interpretation of the Rules. This topic is also fairly technical but it is important to know whether or when a ball we touch, move, lift, drop, place or play is in play.

It's Your Shot!

Dear Editor,

Could you give me a ruling on a situation that occurred recently.

The player was making her swing at the ball when she hit her umbrella on her golf cart during her back swing with her club.

As I cannot find the ruling that was given in the rules book, could you advise of the correct ruling?

Elaine Connor
Duntryleague Golf Club, NSW

Dear Elaine,

As a matter of protocol your query has been forwarded to Golf NSW and we offer the following:

We do get this query from time to time. Without spending time on the rights and wrongs of where to position buggies and equipment, the good news is that the Rules of Golf do not provide any penalty for the action you describe. You are correct that you cannot find a Ruling in the book on this; it does not exist.

I hope this assists in clarification and resolution.

Rod Clark
Manager – Rules & Handicapping - Golf NSW

If you have Rules question or situation to share, please email rulesnewsletter@golf.org.au



Golf Australia

Rules Quiz Answers

Club Level Quiz - Situations Quiz

Answers to Club Level Quiz - Rule Numbers

1. Order of Play
2. Searching for and Identifying Ball
3. Ball Played as it Lies
4. Obstructions
5. Abnormal Ground Conditions
6. Water Hazards
7. Ball Lost out of Bounds; Provisional Ball
8. Advice; Indicating Line of play
9. Ball in Motion Deflected or Stopped
10. Substituted ball; Wrong Ball

Answers to Club Level Quiz using Rule Book

1. Rule 21
2. Rule 17-2
3. Rule 16-1a
4. Rule 4-3
5. Rule 14-2
6. Rule 18-3
7. Rule 28
8. Rule 23-1
9. Rule 11-3
10. Rule 6-1

State Level Decisions Book Answers – Rule Headings

1. Rule 13-2
2. Rule 20-7

3. Rule 20-5
4. Rule 27-1a
5. Rule 25-3

Decision Book Answers

1. Decision 18-2a/4. The player incurs a penalty of one stroke under Rule 18-2a and he must replace his ball before playing his next stroke. Otherwise he loses the hole in match play or he incurs a total penalty of two strokes in stroke play – see penalty statement under Rule 18.
2. Decision 6-3a/2. When a starting time is listed as 9:00 am, the starting time is deemed to be 9:00 am and the player is subject to penalty under Rule 6-3a as he is not present and ready to play at 9:00 am. Therefore, the player incurred a penalty of two strokes in stroke play or loss of the first hole in match play unless the Committee determines that exceptional circumstances had prevented him from starting on time (Exception to Rule 6-3).
3. No, it is not the correct procedure. The ball must be dropped, "At the nearest point to where the ball lay that (a) is not nearer the hole, (b) avoids intervention and (c) is not in a hazard or on a putting green." See Rule 24-2b which differs, and allows, "one club-length of and not nearer the hole than the nearest point of relief."
4. No. The margin of a bunker, unlike that of a water hazard, does not extend vertically upwards. See Definitions.
5. Yes. When the player put the substituted ball into play at the spot of the previous stroke with the intent to play a ball under penalty of stroke and distance (Rule 27-1), the original ball was lost (see definition of "Lost Ball"). Therefore, Rule 20-6 does not apply and he must continue with the substituted ball.

